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The True Doctrine of Prayer

The True Doctrine of Prayer

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
FOR THE UNITED STATES

WITH FOREWORD BY

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
FRANCES LEA CHAMBERLAIN

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον· καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ρῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

—MATTH. vi. 9-13.

The supplication of a righteous man
availeth much in its working.

—JAMES V. 16.

FOREWORD

Gladness goes out of religion just in proportion to the rate at which we lose faith in prayer. It is impossible to serve happily a God with whom we are not on speaking terms. The agnostic's appeal to us to adore the Inscrutable awakens but a feeble response. Will the Inscrutable answer back? Reciprocity is of the essence of worship, and not only reciprocity between God and man, but also reciprocity between believer and believer. The promise runs to the two who shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask. A young friend of mine, a "settlement-worker" on the East Side, was startled the other day when to

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her customary opening formula, "Let us pray," a newcomer in the sewing-class responded with blithe alacrity, "Yes, let's." But the little girl with her naïve readiness showed the true spirit of the Gospel. She made it evident that prayer meant something to her, and that what it meant was delight. After all, there is no more adequate response to the *Oremus* of the historic liturgies than hers; nothing antiphonal in either *Missal* or *Breviary* more uplifting than "Yes, let's."

So, then, whoever has a good word for prayer counts as a helper of our joy, for if we are to be religious at all, we wish to be not gloomily but cheerfully religious.

It strikes me that my friend, the author of this book, has been singularly wise in his choice of a method. It is the method Coleridge employed in his *Aids to Reflection*, and the Hare brothers in

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their *Guesses at Truth*, the method of the aphorism. Instead of formal chapters, after the conventional fashion, we have a logical succession of detached and semi-detached paragraphs, each one of which presents a truth which no one who desires to think deeply about prayer can afford to lose out of sight. This is far better than attempting a "final philosophy" of prayer, which if it fitted perfectly, "with fold to fold," the physics and psychics of to-day would inevitably be set aside as a misfit by the physics and the psychics of to-morrow. How much wiser to be content with such "swallow-flights" of argument as we find here, unambitious to fly farther, or to soar higher, than the wing-mechanism of human faculty makes possible without strain.

But modest as Dr. Chamberlain has shown himself in his choice of a literary

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method, there is nothing timid or apologetic about the claim he makes for prayer. It is not merely as a healthful exercise for the soul that he would have us think of prayer, but as a potency, a dynamic, an efficient cause. All that the New Testament asserts as to prayer's efficacy, he too asserts; all that Christ affirms he reaffirms. He is willing to explain, to interpret, to justify, but never to minimize.

This is because he has put his trust in the competency and the truthfulness of Jesus Christ; and has accepted His as the supreme authority in matters spiritual and religious. Persuaded that the author of the *Pater Noster*, wherever we place Him in the scale of being, may safely be assumed to know more about the relation between God and man than all competitive teachers taken together, he

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adopts His Prayer as the norm of supplicatory utterance, the measure and the test of true devotion. In a word, he finds in the Lord's Prayer what the alchemists used to call the "universal solvent" for all the difficulties of faith, so far as these have to do with man's approach to God. Is it objected that this means falling back on dogma, and dogma is hateful? But dogma is not hateful save when it is clearly of second-hand origin. Dogma direct from headquarters, so far from being hateful, is the very thing we most desiderate in those dim regions of the soul's pilgrimage where demonstration there is none. A proposition once proved by the logical faculty has ceased to be dogma, and has become another thing entirely, "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" There are places in the road where we must either "walk

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by faith" or not walk at all. So let us cease vilifying dogma.

I anticipate for this modest and yet bold little treatise a large usefulness. To those who hold prayer to be impossible because of the reign of law, it will make more persuasive the psalmist's question, "He that hath planted the ear, shall he not hear?" while to others who, having been bred in the theory that prayer is only of subjective value, have grown weary of the habit, it will suggest possibilities of answer to prayer quite beyond anything they have imagined.

W. R. H.

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THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

The true doctrine of prayer is found in the Bible.

Of the time of the third generation of mankind, while our first parents were still living, it is written, "Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah." In primitive days, to one who was imperiled, the word came, "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." The historian of Samuel's life writes, "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto Jehovah thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." The word of David is

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recorded, "For thou, O Jehovah of hosts, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee a house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." It is told of Solomon that when the temple was finished, he stood and said, "Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Jehovah my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee." Nehemiah writes, "I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, the God of heaven: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants." In the narrative of Isaiah we read, "Jehovah, in trouble

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have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer, when thy chastening was upon them." In the book of Daniel it is written, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."

In the New Testament narration, prayer has constant place among Christian experiences, and is recognized as a constant force.

Of our Saviour it is written, "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." "And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered." "These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son

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may glorify thee." In Acts, we read concerning the disciples, after the resurrection:—"These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer." In I. Corinthians, Christians are described by St. Paul as those who pray:—"Called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours." In the first of his epistles, St. John writes, "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." In Revelation it is recorded, "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

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The biblical injunctions concerning prayer are manifold and urgent. In the book of Psalms, it is written, "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify unto thee. I am God, even thy God. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." In Isaiah is the word:—"Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." Through Jeremiah Jehovah declares, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you. And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me."

In the New Testament, the injunctions are the more multiplied and the more emphatic. Our Lord thus speaks:—"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into

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thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee." "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full." St. Paul writes, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The author of Hebrews writes, "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in every time of need." St. James says, "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God,

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who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.”

The promises upholding prayer are well-nigh numberless. The early annals of Israel contain this pledge from Jehovah:—“If my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” In Job we read, “If thou return to the Almighty, then shalt thou be built up. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he will hear thee.” The grateful Psalmist declares,

“Jehovah is nigh unto all them that call
upon him,

To all that call upon him in truth.

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He will fulfil the desire of them that
fear him;

He also will hear their cry, and will
save them."

The wise man of Proverbs affirms:—

"Jehovah is far from the wicked;

But he heareth the prayer of the right-
eous."

This is the word by Isaiah:—"Thou shalt weep no more; he will surely be gracious unto thee, at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear, he will answer thee." "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

To Jeremiah the message came:—"And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." To Zechariah it was re-

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vealed:—"They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God."

In the Gospels we read, "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them, of my Father who is in heaven." "Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." In the epistle of St. James, it is written, "Draw nigh

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to God, and he will draw nigh to you." And again, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working."

Many and illustrious are the Bible's exemplars of prayer.

Abraham, father of the faithful, was a man of prayer. He prayed as he journeyed from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan, and as he went up out of the land of Egypt. He prayed for the fulfilment of the promise concerning his seed, and for Ishmael's welfare, and the sparing of the cities of the Plain. In worship and intercession he communed with God.

Nor was it otherwise with Moses, law-giver of Israel. He sought from God personal guidance and comfort. He

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prayed that Pharaoh might be relieved of the plagues. He interceded for the chosen people:—"And Moses besought Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people? And Jehovah repented the evil which he said he would do unto his people."

Samuel the prophet continued the intercessory service. He besought God at Mizpeh, in behalf of a people repenting of their idolatry. He invoked God's merciful direction of Israel, in their desire for a king. He acknowledged his prophetic obligation to make intercession for the nation, saying, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you." He it was who "cried unto Jehovah all night," when Saul was rejected because of disobedience.

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David, as both king and spiritual leader, was constant mediator in his people's behalf. He prayed that the nation might be blest in the building of the temple, and in the confirming of the royal line. He made supplication for himself and for Israel, when sore pestilence followed the numbering of the people. He penitently acknowledged his transgressions and besought forgiveness.

Isaiah and Jeremiah, and all the other prophets greater and lesser, offered prayer for themselves and their land. It was as intercessor before a living God, that Elijah appeared in the great drama at Carmel, where it was to be decided whether Jehovah or Baal answered prayer.

In the New Testament, we have the

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manifold supplications of our Lord. His whole redemptive experience was marked by prayer.

By prayerful communion with God, he prepared for the signal events of his life. Concerning his baptism it is written, "Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." With regard to the choice of the Apostles we read, "And it came to pass in those days that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve whom also he named apostles." The account of the transfiguration begins, "And it came to pass about eight

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days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. 'And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling.' It was with prelude of prayer that our Saviour entered Gethsemane:—"These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which he entered, himself and his disciples." In the midst of his anguish in the garden, he prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." On the cross, he prayed for himself and others:—"And

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Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

In the Acts and in the Epistles, as also in Revelation, prayers abound, and prayerfulness is the distinguishing characteristic of believing souls. From the days immediately following the Ascension, to the close of the apocalyptic vision, prayer appears as the constant experience of the heroes of the faith. By it they gained their inspiration, their power, their solace, their rest.

To all this is added the gracious witness of the Holy Spirit. In manifold utterances, Scripture teaches that the

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Spirit, in his revivifying of the soul, inspires its holy supplications.

In particular, the great apostle to the Gentiles writes, "And in like manner, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Again, "With all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit." Yet again, having written, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," he also writes, "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." To which is added the word of

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St. Jude, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God."

The teaching is that the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the believer, not only moves him to pray, but also guides and informs his requests. In proportion as the life is lived in the Spirit, the prayer is in accord with the will of God. The believer is the free, responsible medium in which the divine purpose seeks fulfilment, and through which the divine energy, having wrought with sustaining, sanctifying power, returns in gentle glory to itself. The Holy Spirit unites himself with the welcoming spirit of man.

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Thus the authorization and exaltation of prayer is inwrought with all Scripture. Sacred history, divine command, inspired promise, illustrious example, the work of the Spirit, unite in placing prayer among the foremost of biblical verities. No reader of the Bible can doubt its full commitment to the sanction and advocacy of man's prayerful communion with a prayer-hearing God.

In the free range of biblical usage, however, the word prayer is applied to nearly every form of reverent address to God, and prayerful request is repeatedly joined with confession and thanksgiving.

It is with the word, "And Hannah prayed and said," that her song at the presentation of her child in the house of the Lord in Shiloh, is recorded:—

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“ My heart exulteth in Jehovah;
My horn is exalted in Jehovah;
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;

Because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none holy as Jehovah;

For there is none besides thee,

Neither is there any rock like our God.”

In the blessing wherewith Moses blessed the children of Israel before he ascended Mt. Nebo to die, prayerful petition is mingled with commemorative retrospect and rapturous praise. He said,

“ Jehovah came from Sinai,
And rose from Seir unto them;
He shined forth from mount Paran,
And he came from the ten thousands
of holy ones.

Let Reuben live, and not die,

Nor let his men be few.

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Hear, Jehovah, the voice of Judah,

And bring him in unto his people.

There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun,

Who rideth upon the heavens to thy help,

And in his excellency on the skies.”

At the close of the seventy-second Psalm, the words are added, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” Jacob’s wrestling with the angel until the breaking of the day, is described by Hosea as partaking of prayer’s nature. We read, “And in his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Bethel, and there he spake with us, even Jehovah, the God of hosts.”

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The *Gloria in Excelsis* of “the heavenly host praising God and saying,
Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men
in whom he is well pleased,”—
was both prayer and holy pæan.

The *Nunc Dimittis* of Simeon the righteous and devout:—

“Now lettest thou thy servant depart,
Lord,

According to thy word, in peace;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the
face of all peoples;

A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel,”—
was the union of prayerful petition with
pure exultance.

The prayer of our Lord, beginning,
“Father, the hour is come; glorify the
Son, that the Son may glorify thee,”

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includes request, and affirmation, and prophecy, and adoring praise.

Widely varied are the Hebrew terms which in the Old Testament are representative of prayer.

One term has the meaning, 'to call upon':—"Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." A second term primarily referring to intercessory request, is usually rendered by 'to pray':—"For he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." A third term having the literal meaning 'to approach,' is rendered by 'to intercede':—"Yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." A fourth term is rendered by 'to inquire':—"And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not." A fifth

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term meaning literally 'to make the face pleasant,' is rendered by 'to beseech,' 'to entreat':—"And Moses besought Jehovah his God." A sixth term is rendered by 'to cry unto':—"For they shall cry unto Jehovah because of oppressors, and he will send them a saviour."

Equally various are the Greek terms used in the New Testament, in connection with prayer.

A term most directly reverent, and meaning only 'to pray,' is used in the injunction, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." Another term signifying an earnest wish, is strengthened by the words 'to God':—"I would to God, that whether with little or with much,

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not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds." Another term meaning 'to ask,' 'to entreat,' is rendered by 'to make supplication':—"Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not." Another term with the meaning 'to ask,' 'to beg,' is often rendered by the simple 'to ask':—"Ask and it shall be given unto you": "for every one that asketh, receiveth." Still another term signifying 'to ask,' 'to beseech,' is frequently rendered by 'to pray':—"I pray for them: I pray not for the world." Finally a term meaning also 'to ask,' 'to entreat,' is sometimes translated 'to make intercession for':—"Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw

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near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

And here it is to be noted that though biblical usage applies the word prayer to forms of address to God, which are not directly supplicatory, all the Hebrew terms as also all the Greek terms translated 'prayer' have appeal as their central idea. All the original verbs are essentially verbs of request.

Doubtless in all praise and adoration, as in all confession and self-abasement on the part of sinful worshipers, there is an element of desire. The thankful soul craves the divine acceptance of the offered tribute. The heart which communes with God in ways farthest removed from formal request, yearns for favoring response. Communion itself is

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interchange; it implies both giving and receiving. Still it is only by way of accommodation of language that praise, or adoration, or confession, is called prayer.

In the biblical conception, prayerful request becomes an inspiration to all pure thought and all holy emotion; as when the kindling dawn wakes sounds of labor and notes of song, or the celestial attraction swells the tide and freshens the waves along the shore. Yet prayer retains its distinctive meaning of essentially holy, earnest desire directed trustfully, adoringly to God.

In the Scriptural treatment of prayer, supplication holds the sovereign place. It was to supplicatory prayer that God gave his sure promise, calling time and eternity to witness, and putting his universe in pledge. To make possible the

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effectiveness of solicitant prayer, required the vast redemptive plan. It involved the parental affection which no unfilial revolt could quench; the boundless compassion which no experience of pain could turn aside. God's covenant to hear and answer petitionary prayer could be made good, only by the progressive unfolding of his holy will, and by the final demonstration of his righteous love. The access of the pleading penitent to the throne of grace could be ensured and perfected, only through the atoning sacrifice and the consequent bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Of prayerful supplication as of the restored sonship, it may be said, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself the chief cornerstone."

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And on the human side, prayer as reverent petition holds corresponding rank. Taken with its necessary implications it is the blessing of blessings. It realizes to the trustful believer his regained communion with God. When the speech that day utters unto day is unheard by ears made heavy through disobedience, and the knowledge that night showeth unto night is unperceived by minds darkened through sin, the call to prayer reveals that a mercy-loving God is still near. And when the call is welcomed, the suppliant finds that the Father's willingness to give exceeds his utmost asking. He finds that he who is creative light and all-sustaining life, sovereign ruler and holy judge, is offering benefits that out-compass finite thought.

What wonder that the praying soul speaks the language of praise as well as

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of petition! What wonder that his contrition is deepened, his faith confirmed, his consecration renewed! Rather were it strange if the mercy-seat were not his dearest refuge, the very pavilion of his joy and rest.

Well did the sainted Montgomery who had written the lines:—

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,

add the stanza:—

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death,—
He enters heaven with prayer.

Still further, true prayer is the hope, the safeguard, of the whole world. To

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all souls, by virtue of Christ's atoning work, it points the way of return to God. In the intelligent, sincere offering of the publican's petition, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner," the guiltiest may gain forgiveness and eternal life. While, by reason of the blessings which prayer calls down upon all mankind, even prayerless humanity is kept from still sadder decline. Prayer is a power in the upholding of the great common weal. Were no real prayer offered, the world were lost indeed.

Therefore, when our Lord, in response to a request of his disciples, gives an example of rightful prayer, the event is of signal importance. And if, as appears not improbable, our Lord, on two occasions, presented essentially the same

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prayer, the significance of the event is thereby enhanced. Surely, when he who is himself the truth; who knows the past and comprehends the future; who abides in the Father, yet embodies humanity and dwells with men; who unites in his twofold nature absolute sovereignty and perfect dependence; sets forth, for his followers, a model of prayer, the act is of transcendent moment. It is clear that, in the fulness of time, we have a perfect disclosure of the meaning and law, the privilege and prerogative, of all prayerful petition. It appears that the disclosure is both retrospective and prophetic; that the divinely given example reflects past experience, so that we may know therefrom what God has ever, or anywhere, accepted as true supplication; even as it forecasts future reality, so that we may learn

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thereby what God will at any time, or in any place, regard as prayerful entreaty. In the so-called Lord's Prayer we have a renewed assurance that God answers prayer, together with a divine unfolding of the way of rightful request.

And this certitude is, if possible, made the more sure by a reverent, appreciative study of the prayer itself. The sufficient warrant appears the more abundantly sufficing, when we give heed to the several petitions in which the prayer consists; as to the shepherds, the sight of the angelic host became the more impressive, when the words of the song were heard; or, at the baptism in Jordan, the opened heavens gained new significance, when the voice spoke and the Spirit descended.

The words of the prayer are so simple,

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so lowly, that the child may catch and love their message. Their compass is so vast, that the wisest, purest of men must needs wonder and adore.

After this manner therefore pray ye:
OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HAL-
LOWED BE THY NAME. THY KINGDOM
COME. THY WILL BE DONE, AS IN HEAV-
EN, SO ON EARTH. GIVE US THIS DAY
OUR DAILY BREAD. AND FORGIVE US OUR
DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR
DEBTORS. AND BRING US NOT INTO TEMP-
TATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL.

And here let it be recognized as of fundamental import, that throughout the Lord's Prayer, in the order of both thought and expression, the divine honor

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has precedence. In this, the prayer is like the decalogue and the two great commands. And this is profoundly fitting. Since God is creator and upholder, infinitely loving and infinitely wise, his exaltation is the necessary condition of every good. Inasmuch as all things rest on God, and find in him their true end, there can be no possibly consistent notion of the rightful plan, which does not assign to God the incomparably highest place.

The divinely modeled prayer begins with filial adoration. The invocation to the Father in heaven is clearly an expression of sincere, childlike homage. Viewed in the light of what was precedently known respecting God's majesty and might, and interpreted in the radi-

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ance of the words which immediately follow, that invocation must be regarded as an adoring recognition of gracious fatherhood in union with kingliness of rule. The words are wholly natural to a familiar, grateful perception of tenderest love allied with sovereign control. In truth, the invoking sentence does not really end until, in desire, the name of the one invoked is worshipfully honored, his dominion explicitly acknowledged, and his will set in regal supremacy over the powers of both earth and heaven. To him who is great and greatly to be praised, the praying soul is to approach with filial, worshipful trust.

Moreover, the words, "Our Father who art in heaven," embodying the fatherhood of God, embody also the

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brotherhood of his children. The sequence, the bond, is inevitable. Indeed, in the primitive ascription to God of man's creation, sure foundation had been laid for the universal fellowship of men. Albeit sin quickly rent humanity's seamless robe, and resultant hate marred the blissful vision, the ideal lived on. Gaining partial realization in Israel, it swept thence to an inclusion of all peoples and tongues. Malachi's reproachful question, "Have we not all one father?" became prelude to Paul's exultant declaration, "God hath made of one every nation of men."

Accordingly, into his invocatory word our Lord gathered the inspirations of the past. Herein also he came not to destroy but to fulfil. In behalf of man he breathed the filial word, and the fraternal relationship was confirmed for-

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evermore. Thenceforth, though personal hatreds, and provincial jealousies, and national enmities, and race antipathies, might becloud the sky, the fraternity of men became as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Whoever, therefore, employs that sacred invocation, owns his kinship with all mankind. He pledges himself thereby to a generous care for the well-being of the whole world. If he breaks that pledge, he stands self-condemned.

And the specific petition, "Hallowed be thy name," continuing the adoring invocation, at once honors its reverential spirit and discloses its practical intent. In the hallowing of God's name is the rendering of honor to whom honor is

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due, and of glory to whom glory belongs. It means primal, essential harmony, as when unnumbered voices blend in melody full and sweet. It signifies central and eternal order, as when gravitation holds all material things in fitting, stable relation. It requires that with God's righteousness all souls shall be in essential accord, and that to his holy law all shall intend to render glad compliance.

Accordingly, the petition for the hallowing of God's name rightfully involves an intensity of wish commensurate with the blessedness in view. When those requesting words are becomingly used, they embody the suppliant's profound desire. Out of the rapturous vision springs the impassioned plea. Conversely, he who takes those supplicatory

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words as scarce more than honorific prelude, does despite to the Master's teaching, and wrongs his own soul.

Similarly with the petition, "Thy kingdom come." That petition springs from, and enlarges, the petition preceding. Only as God's name is practically hallowed by his intelligent creatures, can his kingdom reach its destined triumph; and when God's name is so hallowed, the kingdom's triumph is assured.

And yet the kingdom, in its matchless beneficence, is graciously made the object of special request. The praying soul is permitted to dwell on the kingdom's gentle grandeur:—its just foundations,—ancient as the divine origination of all things good, and of man in the image of God; the breadth of its designed in-

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clusion,—all kindreds and peoples and tongues; its terms of membership, elemental and therefore universal,—repentance and faith, a fruitful repentance which looks toward right character, and a working faith which seeks to accelerate the crowning of the righteous King; its distinctive, peerless fruits,—the realized fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men, with the fair supremacy of truth and love. It is a matter of record that he who framed the petition, “Thy kingdom come,” himself so taught and illustrated its meaning and power.

He, then, who prays that God's reign may prevail among men, is inevitably summoned to ask it with all his heart and mind. The strength of his desire in the kingdom's behalf must correspond to

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the measure of his thought concerning the worth of the kingdom itself, and the worthiness of the kingdom's King. The petition, to be real and thus acceptable, can be neither formal nor merely complimentary. It must, of blessed necessity, be sincere and earnest.

Nor is it otherwise with the third petition, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." That petition confirms and supplements those which have gone before. When God's name is duly hallowed, and God's kingdom truly established, then will the doing of his will be blessedly accomplished. And, in turn, when God's will is done, his name will be hallowed and his kingdom established.

In the words, "as in heaven, so on earth"—words which doubtless apply to

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the preceding petitions as well,—heavenly things are openly joined with earthly, and the measure of the desired doing of God's will on earth is declared to be the measure of heaven itself. With regard to all finite realities, thoughts of men and their outward acts, individuals and nations alike, the third petition entreats a complete accomplishment of the divine preference. As face answers to face in water, God's wish is everywhere to be fulfilled.

It ensues that he who says, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," is summoned to earnestness of soul. The petition is too sacred, too solemn, to admit of mere lip-recital. The informing conception is too plainly, inclusively practical, to allow of the suppliant's ex-

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emption. In him truly, in him first of all, the doing of God's will is to become a fact. Rather than an insincere utterance, it were well that silence should seal the lips.

Such are the three petitions set by our Lord in the forefront of the model prayer. Their united charm and might rightfully demand the enkindled thought, the enraptured desire, of every praying soul. On those who pray they confer the privilege of being borne upward by the very sweetness and splendor of the ends in view. In the sequence of primary relations, those petitions are basal. In the circle of rational reflection, they are central. They sound the depths. They ascend the heights. Both intellectually and spiritually, theirs is the

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just precedence. Challenged by the conceit of finite mind, they might answer, in hallowed phrase, "Where wast thou when our foundations were laid? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who determined the measure thereof, if thou knowest? Or who stretched the line thereon? Whereupon were our foundations fastened? Or who laid the cornerstone thereof?"

And those petitions—let it not be forgotten—were divinely framed for use in a world which sin had ruined: a world where God's name was blasphemed; his glorious dominion set at naught; his loving, righteous will disowned; while want and sorrow laid waste the souls of men, and cursed the very ground. By that sadly tremendous fact those petitions are

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given an intenser purport. They plead for world-wide rescue. They intercede for truth's victory, in its battle with falsehood. They ask that base revolt may be turned to loyal love. They implore divine assistance, in the encounter of light and life with gloom and death. In their relation to a world gone wrong, they reflect the tragedy of sin's defiance of God, and its consequent devastation of all mankind. They embody the meaning of Sinai's thunders, and they anticipate Calvary's bitter cry. Through them speaks a creation groaning and travailing in pain.

Thank God, they also enfold a prophecy of the hour when the warfare shall cease, in wrong's defeat; the hour when "In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and

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every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

He who repeats the words, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," may well recall his soul from every lesser thought and choice. He is uttering petitions which include the highest well-being of both heaven and earth. At the same time, he is acknowledging that community of spirit and interest, which is expressly revealed in the words 'Our Father,' and which is involved in the very nature and compass of the petitions themselves.

Not till those petitions, primary and controlling and communal, have been

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adoringly presented, is there admission of requests for so-called personal blessings.

But, for that very reason, the admission of personal requests, when granted, is full and free. On the foundation of the divine Fatherhood, and the sincerely invoked fulfilment of God's sovereign will, is rested the privilege of supplication for things which more narrowly and more directly concern the suppliant himself.

And the three minor petitions correspond to the major petitions which precede. In the first of those major petitions, is the special recognition of the heavenly Father; in the second, the recognition of the Father as righteous King; in the third, the recognition of the Father as loving Ruler whose thought and

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will embrace the things of earth, no less than the things of heaven. In the first of the minor petitions, the praying soul looks to his Father for parental care; in the second, to his Father and King for free forgiveness; in the third, to his Father and Ruler for guidance and defence.

The request, "Give us this day our daily bread," signifies primarily the desire for physical sustenance, in filial acknowledgment of the truth that even our material dependence is solely on God. The request is based on the divine immanence. It takes into vivid account the fact that, save for God's personal upholding, all created things would instantly return to the nothingness whence he called them.

It adds thereto the faith that a divine

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providence concerns itself with things least as well as things greatest, even with fragile moth and fading flower and falling sparrow.

Then, from the thought of physical sustenance the conception rises and broadens to the inclusion of spiritual good. The expanding desire takes in the soul's support and upbuilding. The confident asking contemplates the whole being nourished into harmonious growth, and nurtured into the likeness of him in whose image man was first designed. The intercession is quick with the realization that "in God we live and move and have our being."

Tennyson has well written,

"God is law," say the wise, O soul, and let
us rejoice;
For if he thunders by law, the thunder is
yet his voice.

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Speak to him then for he hears, and spirit
with spirit may meet ;
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer
than hands and feet.

And the rightly praying soul freely yields to the inspiration of a plea so personal and so large. He thrills with the consciousness that his plea is not only for the safeguarding of life's conditions, and for life itself, but also for the upholding of that vital union with God, which outward adversity cannot destroy. With grateful emotion, he perceives that his permitted asking includes such assurance of standing in grace divine, that though plans fail and hopes are disappointed, he may still be undismayed; that though death works its seemingly destructive work, he may say, with unshaken confidence, "O death, where is

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thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? ”

Nor is he averse to the inference that one who thus owes all to God, may well present himself a living sacrifice, and count it his most reasonable and blessed service.

The request, “ Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,” involves a confession of personal demerit. It is the request of a soul whose sins are acknowledged, and whose desire is for the blotting out of manifold transgression. The asking, accordingly, is for a favor without which the preceding petition cannot be realized. Unless the soul is forgiven, its daily sustaining is but measurably blessed, and its acceptance with God is morally impossible.

Nor is the duty of the suppliant left

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in doubt. In the words, "as we also have forgiven our debtors," it is revealed anew that character, conduct, is at the basis of the desired reconciliation. Repentance and faith are still disclosed as the essential requirements,—a repentance which sets itself against the repetition of offence, and a faith which undertakes, with divine aid, to attain the virtues in which sound character consists.

The terms of the request make it wholly clear that no one can rightly seek forgiveness, unless he himself has already exercised a forgiving spirit. The prescribed words do not permit recourse to what is only loosely intended. He who offers the plea for forgiveness, cannot rest in the notion that his own feeling toward his debtors is to be, in general, merely unresentful. His personal and decisive attitude in the premises must be

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favorably determined, before his plea can be favorably heard. He must already have been willing to forgive his debtors; else, his asking turns to his own condemnation.

It follows, too, as night the day, that he who asks for God's forgiveness must himself have made it possible for those whom he has offended to grant him their forgiveness. It were rash to imagine that one might confine his rectifying action solely to those against whom he has just cause of complaint. He must repent, and must be ready to manifest repentance, with reference to those whom he has wrongly treated.

In other words, forgiveness is so profoundly ethical, that it cannot be consummated save as the ethical conditions

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are actually supplied. No one can really forgive his guilty debtors, unless those debtors repent. As has been seen, a forgiving spirit may call for an endeavor to bring offending debtors into penitence; yet the actual forgiveness cannot be bestowed, until the offenders qualify themselves to receive the proffered bestowal. Conversely, on no other terms can he who forgives, receive forgiveness from those against whom he has transgressed. He, too, must truly repent him of the wrong which he has done.

Whoever, then, comes to God with the plea, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," judges himself. To make possible his receiving of God's forgiveness, he must himself cherish a forgiving spirit; must endeavor to

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win his unrepentant debtors to a better mind; and must put himself in a forgivable relation to those against whom he has trespassed: even as it is written, "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift before the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Therefore, he who prays for forgiveness, may well be in earnest. If the intensity of his supplication is at all commensurate with his need, it will reflect the feeling that denial would be calamity supreme.

The plea, "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil," also

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involves a good which is essential to man's well-being.

Though the daily sustenance be given, and the forgiveness of the penitent be granted, there will still remain the peril of temptation mischievously subtle, or dangerously sudden and severe. There will be the possibility of the suppliant's remissness, the more than possibility of a lack of love and faith. Ever and anon thought will run riot, desire will overpass just bounds, and choice will assert its fearful power to set at naught both reason and right. Unless the tempted one may dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, he will have reason to fear not only the terror by night, but also the arrow that flieth by day. Left to himself, he will learn by dismal experience that, "Except Jehovah build the

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house, they labor in vain that build it: except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

The more clearly one understands his spiritual condition, the more earnestly will he plead for spiritual protection. Deliverance from spiritual evil will be his urgent request day and night.

Moreover, in the three petitions minor and supplementary, as in the invocation and the three petitions major and primal, the suppliant must own that kinship with others, which forbids selfish isolation. His personal requests may be singular in their form; but in their spirit they must be plural as well. As it was "Our Father," so it is "our daily bread," "our

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debts " and " our debtors," " deliver us." Weighty truth is in the rabbinical saying, " In prayer, a man should always unite himself with the community."

Thus the prayer which our Lord taught his disciples reveals its supremacy. In its own right, it takes rank far above uninspired petitions. Like the holy city Jerusalem, it has on the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates; for, like that city, it lieth four square, and its length is as great as the breadth. Finite reflection cannot exhaust the meaning of the prayer. Affection cannot measure the wealth of its filial aspiring. Wish cannot reach the bounds of its confident hope. Volition cannot match the ardor of its

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preference for the doing of the Father's will. In its covenanted mercies, the frailest find shelter. It instructs. It comforts. It enkindles. It uplifts. It purifies. It bears on its bosom every infirmity and pain. Itself sealed forever by the sacrificial work of Christ, it proclaims to every sinning soul the way of repentance and faith unto life eternal. It sounds the battle-cry against all that hurts or destroys. It lifts anew the standard of the righteous Ruler. It affords assurance that though the heavens and the earth fail, the pleading of those who love the King shall be heard on high.

It is evident that the Lord's Prayer was designed to be the norm, the type, of all prayerful petition. By infallible signs, that pattern approves itself as em-

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bodying prayer's law, both intellectual and spiritual, both psychological and scientific. Therefore by that prayer every entreaty is to be tried. By its content every supplication is to be approved or condemned. What is not essentially in keeping with the Lord's Prayer is not true prayer.

Here let it be clearly, gratefully recognized that the Lord's Prayer, in its disclosure of what is essential to all prayer, does by no means rule out those petitions in which, for sufficient reasons, the requisite elements are present in only rudimentary form and incipient degree. The little child may truly pray, though its perceptions are inchoate, its emotions and desires infantile, and though its reverent words fail, at last, on sleeping lips.

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It is narrated that as a Scotch gentleman was on his way to the kirk, he heard, through the wayside hedge, articulate sounds. Observing, he found, just over the hedge, a little lad upon his knees, repeating the letters of the alphabet. To an inquiry as to the meaning of his act, the lad replied, "Please, sir, I was wishing to pray; but as I did not well know how, I thought I might repeat the letters, and then perhaps God himself would put them into the right words." The laddie had been set to mind the sheep, and might not leave his post, although it was the Lord's day and the kirk bells were ringing. Yet his heart was moved by a childlike wish for the Father's love and grace. Accordingly, he employed the only method of address to God, which appeared to him available. Of a surety, his act was prayer. Doubtless it was

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essentially holy, earnest desire directed trustfully, adoringly to God. It contained, in embryo, the elements of the prayer which our Lord gave to his disciples.

In like manner, the sick, the physically and mentally overborne, may truly pray, albeit the soul is scarce conscious of the prayerful uplift. The uneducated, the uninstructed, may offer veritable prayer, although the Father's omniscience must find chief warrant for acceptance in the taking of the will for the deed. Even of some who bow down to idols, and make a fetish of what is farthest beneath them, it may possibly be said, in truth, that they are seeking God, if haply they may feel after him and find him. The prayer-mill which is turned by wind or stream,

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may represent desires which are accepted at the heavenly throne.

Nothing is surer than that the divine compassion looks past mere imperfections, and reckons as availing prayer every form of address to God, in which are the hidings of essentially holy, earnest desire. That desire may be expressed in either words or works; or, in the conceivable absence of opportunity for either words or works, it may find no outward expression. Any essentially pure desire, ascending to God trustfully, adoringly, though in silence, is true prayer. And, by token of the Lord's Prayer, nothing else is really prayerful.

Advancing now to a more specific and illustrative application of the require-

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ments revealed, and having direct reference to those who may be supposed to be fairly competent, let us see yet more clearly within what inevitable ethical, spiritual limits prayer has its realm.

It appears not only that souls who have no love for truth and right and God do not pray, but also that, so long as such is their chosen attitude and act, they debar themselves from prayer. To a soul completely unloving, unrepentant, true prayer is intrinsically impossible. God is both righteous and loving. He is both right and love. Therefore no enlightened soul can honestly say even so much as, "Our Father who art in heaven," unless he proves his filial spirit, by striving for personal harmony with him whose child he has acknowledged

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himself to be. His seemingly filial address is manifestly insincere, save as he seeks that personal rightness which is fair response to the righteousness of God. In his consciousness of having transgressed God's loving law; in his recognition of himself as having done many things which he knew he ought not to do, and having omitted many things which he knew to be binding; he must needs perceive that he has set a positive barrier between himself and God; and that, until he purposes amendment and craves forgiveness, he maintains that barrier. He shuts himself from even the outer court of the temple of prayer. He holds himself from crossing so much as the threshold of that throne-room where forgiving love bestows its blessings. He makes of none effect the inviting assurance which is addressed to all contrite

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hearts:—"Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and he will say, Here I am."

The suppliant may say, Lord, teach me how to pray; Lord, give me faith; Be merciful to me a sinner; yet along with those pleas, and in some wise preceding them, must be the filial pledge, I do repent; I do believe; Thou knowest that I love thee.

"In the nature of things," such is the truth concerning those who responsibly remain in unfilial disregard of the Father's love, the Saviour's compassion, the Holy Spirit's persuasion. By their permitted indifference or their determined resistance, they exclude themselves from

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the covenant of a prayer-hearing God. They put themselves outside of both the philosophy and promise of veritable prayer.

In other and further statement, it is incorrect to speak of simply earnest request, request unaccompanied by essentially loyal love, as prayer. For it must never be overlooked that all prayer has in it the spirit, the ethical quality, of the words, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

Suppose, accordingly, that one who has never sincerely offered, and is not now prepared sincerely to offer, those fundamental petitions, addresses God in terms of supplication. Suppose the sup-

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pliant to be a parent pleading for the life of his only child. His entreaty is with strong cries and tears. In his anguish, the petitioner essays to rend the heavens and, by the very intensity of his desire, to draw down an answer of mercy. He says, "O thou in whose hands are the issues of life, to whom belongeth escape from death, hear my cry. My soul of soul pleads for the dear one's rescue. My fond affections, my ever-present joys, my abounding hopes, are wrapt up in that imperiled life. If the grave is to claim its victim, then it were well that it should receive, in the one fatal hour, both father and child. O God, hold not thy peace at my tears. Grant my supplication, for my soul is sorrowful even unto death."

The suppliant lets himself imagine that, for once at least, he has prayed.

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But his request lacked prayer's prime requisite.

The pleading one had received from his heavenly Father unnumbered blessings. His own life; the life of his child; the affection which bound the two in bonds so precious; the noble amenities of the home; the cherished anticipations which lighted up their future;—all these possessions had proved God's constant kindness. The recipient had owned, in intellectual concession, that such was, for him, the source of favor.

Yet he had never responded with true gratitude. He had never deemed it worth while filially to own God's sovereign claim, and thus, in thankfulness, to invoke that favor which is life, and that loving-kindness which is better than

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life. Although conscious that he had often, and without excuse, been disobedient alike to his soul's vision and the commandment's word, he had never given himself to repentant sorrow, nor consecrated himself to righteous service. Notwithstanding that he had perceived, with such clearness as his unfilial attitude would permit, that since the heavenly Father was giver of all things and lover of all souls, there could be no right character which did not include personal loyalty to that same Father, he had offered to God no supreme affection, no devoted fealty.

Still, when danger threatened the object of his own parental love, he thought himself permitted—his character remaining unchanged—to plead for the removal of the dreaded cup. He fancied that he prayed.

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In reality, he was very far from true prayer. He forgot, or at all events he fatally disregarded, the example of him whose words were, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The example of him who, being in agony so that his sweat became as it were great drops of blood, began his prayer with, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me," and closed it with, "Howbeit, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Only the repentant, those whose character includes love of truth and right and God, do really pray. The requests of a completely obdurate soul are not true prayer. To an utterly impenitent heart,

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true prayer is intrinsically impossible. It is written, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

In further application of this essential truth, it becomes clear that requests to God, employed even by those who at heart are his friends, are not prayer, *in so far* as there is lack of penitence and purposed purity.

To the prophet-judge of Israel came the word, "Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart."

The Psalmist writes,

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“ If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.”

The author of Proverbs declares,
“ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abom-
ination to Jehovah,
But the prayer of the upright is his
delight.”

Isaiah writes, “ And the Lord said,
Forasmuch as this people draw nigh
unto me, and with their mouth and with
their lips do honor me, but have removed
their heart far from me, and their fear
of me is a commandment of men which
hath been taught them; therefore the
wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
and the understanding of their prudent
men shall be hid.”

St. Paul affirms, “ But the end of the
charge is love, out of a pure heart and
a good conscience and faith unfeigned.”

St. James declares, “ Ye ask, and re-

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ceive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures.”

For example, one who is really a Christian, but whose greatly besetting and sadly tolerated sins are worldliness and self-indulgence, asks God, in terms, to give his people true consecration, so that they may set their minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. He pleasantly recounts the fact that there are treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. Not unlikely, the current of his words bears him on to the familiar acknowledgment that, “Where a man’s treasure is, there will his heart be also.” He discourses fluently of the very things he lacks. He implores

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grace from above to supply the defect. He flatters himself that he means what he says. He carelessly supposes that he is offering prayer.

But his much speaking is not true supplication. Had he beforehand tested himself by the Lord's Prayer, that universal touchstone and model, he would have known how worse than vain would be his uttered plea. Had he looked within for the filial, fervent adoration which breathes in the words, "Our Father who art in heaven"; had he cared to see himself in the light of the entreaty, "Thy kingdom come"; had he dared to measure his real desire by the petition, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth"; had he seen fit to recognize the inescapable meaning of the cry, "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil"; he would

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have wondered at the hardihood of his self-deception. Had he minded the monitions of the Spirit of truth, he would have turned his intended words into heartfelt confession, and have penitently invoked that long-suffering which does not quench even the smoking flax.

There can be no real prayer unless the suppliant is in intended harmony with God and things divine. *So far forth* as repentance is lacking, and operative faith is absent, his petitions are not prayerful.

Pathetically, tragically true was the reflection of the king in *Hamlet*, as he rose from his attitude of devotion,

“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below :

Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go.”

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It is to be graven on the tablet of the heart, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, that even a Christian does not pray, when he makes requests in which conscience and character are not truly expressed. Secret sin, sin unrepented of, vitiates, so far forth, even the Christian's plea. By the application of that simple, necessary, biblical rule, how much of so-called prayer disappears!

Moreover, that is a helpful variation of this same truth, which impresses upon us the fact that that can hardly be reckoned as prayer, wherein the soul's chief interest is centered in what is known to be comparatively unimportant.

In real prayer, there is a certain harmony of proportion. The pleading soul

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whom God accepts is accepted, indeed, with all its weaknesses and wastes. Sovereign grace aids in overcoming imperfections. Power from above is freely bestowed for the building of sound fragments into a perfect temple in the Lord. Yet integrity of soul always has, in its action, somewhat of harmonic force.

Accordingly, that which is perceived to be of higher moment, must have higher regard. Though the perceptions may vary in their clearness; though the emotions may flame and fade; and though the judicial affirmings may be subject to rise and fall of momentum; the standard proportions will be respected. The rational mind is characterized by the keeping of that law.

When, therefore, one thinks to pray, he must see to it that he does not fail to put that as highest in regard, which he

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has already owned to be highest in actual worth.

For example, a disciple of Christ lives a life which, to his own reflection,—when he allows himself to reflect—is far from worthy. He knows that he has neither the incomparable peace, nor the abounding joy; neither the keenly thankful heart, nor the greatly quickened conscience; which are the normal effects of the indwelling Spirit. He is aware that his life is not fruitful in those deeds of self-denying love which naturally mark the union of the living branch with the true and living vine. He perceives, at least in his better moments, that his witnessing for Christ is proportionally ineffective. Yet about all that, he is not deeply moved. That such has been his

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spiritual condition he has, literally, not much cared.

But now he finds himself in peculiar personal distress. His good name is assailed. He is slandered. That reputation on which he has prided himself, and in which those dear to him have hitherto rejoiced, is put in hazard by false accusation. Into the dark valley of personal humiliation his way appears to lead.

Or, it may be that his business plans are imperiled. The devices of the wholly unscrupulous are working to his financial detriment. Looking upon the impending ruin, he becomes as those of whom the Revelator writes, "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more; merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet."

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In his sad forebodings, he bethinks himself of prayer. He has always considered that prayer's promise was inclusive of things temporal as well as of things spiritual; and he now wonders whether he who concerns himself with the sparrow's fall, and of old gave his angels charge over the steps of good men, may not afford him some way of escape. He enters his closet. He bows himself to pray. He makes known his anguish. It seems to him that if he falls upon the dreaded stone, he shall be broken to pieces; and that if on him the stone falls, it will scatter him as dust.

His words are heard but, alas, true prayer's condition precedent is largely wanting. The essential holiness of attitude and act is painfully deficient. He

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omits that contrition for his unspiritual, unfruitful past, without which he cannot have influential relationship with the Answerer of prayer. In his apprehension of earthly loss, he thinks little of that fine consecration which he ought always to possess. He foolishly measures his praying by the intensity of his present desire. He deceives himself into the notion that he has power with God and may prevail.

Suppose, in all reverence, that God replies to such a petitioner. Suppose that this is the admonitory word:—"You call me the Hearer of prayer; and you say well, for so I am. But I read the heart, and know the life. Once you came to me in a penitence so deep and in a love so pure that I was able to grant the for-

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givenness which you sought. And since that hour I have followed you with my promised aid. I have ever sought to heighten your appreciation of the value of holy character, the incomparable beauty of a life hid with Christ. But you suffered your first affection to grow cold. You were conscious, so far as you let your better self awake, that you were grieving the Spirit of truth and love. And in that dereliction you have been easily content. The mercy-seat has not, of late, known you as a greatly interested suppliant.

“ Yet now, without special sorrow for the past, and consequently without heart-felt pledges of a devoted future, you come to me with desperate supplications. Your intense concern relates to what you know, have always known, to be comparatively unimportant. You con-

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sider your present asking to be prayer. But test it by the necessarily antecedent plea, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Thus judged, your petition is scarce prayer at all. You do not know your own heart."

Supplication, then, is not prayer, *so far forth* as the soul's chief interest is centered in what the suppliant knows to be comparatively unimportant.

A further clear conclusion is that that is not prayer wherein, and *in so far* as, the soul is either mentally or spiritually indifferent. Real prayer implies that something is really desired; and that

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the desire is really directed to God. St. Paul gave natural expression to a natural sequence of thought and emotion, when he wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved."

Prayer's transaction is sublime. In prayer, Jehovah attentively listens to his erring creature. Infinite love hearkens to one whose affection is, at best, imperfect. Infinite power stoops to him whose strength is veriest weakness.

The condescension is but characteristic of him whose tender mercies are over all his works; yet that glorious fact makes all the more becoming, all the more needful, such earnestness of desire on the suppliant's part as shall witness his appreciation of how precious is the privilege of prayer.

It is but sane that he who essays to

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pray, should recognize that the place is holy, and that the presence he seeks is the presence of the King of kings.

But what if the would-be suppliant is unawakened in mind and heart? What if he kneels to pray, while yet his thoughts are wandering and his emotions wayward?

Let it be imagined that thoughts are winged heralds, and emotions flaming spirits. Let it be understood that they are summoned to present to God a solemn, adoring plea. But suppose that, instead of approaching the mercy-seat in worshipful obeisance, they permit discourteous confusion to prevail. Suppose that the swift heralds stray rudely here and there, and that the gleaming attendants let themselves be lapped in idleness,

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or allured to things quite alien. Suppose, too, that the will, set in lordship over both thoughts and emotions, makes no large effort to enforce control.

How would the like of that be looked upon by even an earthly sovereign? How could such pretence of supplication be at all accepted? The questions are their own answers. And yet, how many so-called prayers are thus disabled and destroyed! How often does the soul, taking up the form of prayer, suffer itself to be borne along on the sound and flow of accustomed words, while desire droops and aspiration slumbers!

Mental indolence never prays. The intellect's activities may be hindered by physical weakness, and overborne by stress too long maintained; and such in-

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voluntary lack is sure to be condoned. He who is considerate of the bruised reed will kindly understand. But voluntary inattention; apathy to which the soul consents; that deserves and receives austere reproof. Such thoughtlessness cannot reach the scepter of the power divine.

Spiritual indolence never prays. The spirit's powers may be so repressed by the body's weakness and the mind's fatigue, that to rise and soar seems impossible; and such regretted inability will be gently overlooked. He who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust, will compassionate our low estate. But spiritual insensibility which is not regretted; the spiritual sluggard's folding of his hands; that will be considered an offence.

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True prayer has in it earnestness of desire. Not seldom it strives, like Jacob in his wrestling with the angel. In his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me." To the Colossians he says, "I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, that your hearts may be comforted." And again, "Epaphras, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers." Of similar purport are the parables of the 'Friend at midnight' and the 'Importunate Widow.'

Assuredly, petition, whether spoken or silent, is not prayer, *in so far* as he who

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assumes to pray consents to either mental or spiritual unconcern.

And these are but examples.

What has now been perceived necessitates the conclusion that true prayer cannot exist, save within certain generous yet changeless bounds; that nothing is true prayer unless it partakes, in some degree, of essentially holy, earnest desire, directed trustfully, adoringly to God.

Prayer is never mere asking. Its petition embodies conscience, character. Its entreaty embraces a primary, all-controlling desire for the hallowing of the Father's name, the coming of his kingdom, the doing of his will. Prayer's supplication, thus beginning and thus continuing, may fittingly end in the

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adoring ascription:—"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

None the less, the covenant of prayer is radiantly expressive of the Father's grace. It reveals his tender love. Into a relationship to which reverently affectionate asking and wondrously bountiful bestowal are natural, God invites his sinning, sorrowing children. He forbids their despair. He seeks to make impossible their discouragement. To the lost son in the far country he sends his pleading Spirit, that the deserted home may come to mind, and the heart grow wistful at the thought. To a world guilty and dark God gives his own beloved Son to suffer and to die, that thus his compassion may be known and felt.

It is true that God's love is holy and

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his compassion righteous, for God himself is love and right. It is true that unless the self-condemned regard the Redeemer's plea, the redemption cannot avail. Love would not be love, were moral distinctions set aside. Therefore the upholding of those distinctions does not dim the love; neither do prayer's ethical, spiritual requirements lessen the tenderness of its appeal. The gates of prayer are opened wide to all who care to enter. Prayer's judicial working is but harmonious with the word which says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him": yet adds, as with tears, "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light."

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Concerning the objects of prayer, it is to be understood that no domain is excluded.

Assuredly, whatever is for the hallowing of the Father's name; the speedy coming of his kingdom; the perfect realization of his holy will; is germane to prayer. It is logically inevitable that all that concerns the welfare of man and the consequent glory of God is within the range of rightful supplication.

As God's kingdom embraces everything which makes for righteousness and peace and joy; as his purpose takes in all that promotes his creatures' blessedness; it is even obligatory that loyal souls should present requests for whatever may further those great ends. The maintenance of world-wide justice and peace, with liberty under law; the harmonizing of racial instincts and interests; the se-

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cure establishment of rightful civil authority; the equitable composing of class antagonisms; fair wages for labor faithfully performed; the honest acquisition of riches; the consecration of wealth to social service; the reverencing of the family; the protection of childhood; the honoring of manhood; the holding of womanhood sacred; the advancement of learning; the development of science and art; the feeding of hunger; the clothing of nakedness; the relieving of sickness; the reforming of the depraved; the utmost possible removal of whatever hurts or destroys;—all that, of blessed necessity, is included in the prayers of those who love both God and man. Only thus can God's will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

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And therewith runs emphatic warrant for prayer relating to immediately personal wants.

In the sanctioned petition for bread day by day is plainly included whatever concerns the personal well-being. The sustenance of the daily life comprises everything which may minister to sound personal advantage, provided the just community of interests is always borne in mind.

As has already been perceived, no purely selfish petition can be prayer. In so far as the asking soul is unmindful of God's love for all the members of the human family, and thus omits to honor the common bond, the plea is void. By his own act, the suppliant denies himself the privilege of prayerful request. All prayer from instructed souls must be with dominant recognition of the Fa-

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therhood of God and the consequent brotherhood of men. He who disowns that condition violates the covenant of prayer, and dishonors the covenant-keeping King.

But within the bounds of a just regard for the interests of others, and an open comprehension of what true self-interest means, the praying soul may ask for all that concerns his earthly life. No pleasure or pain; no hope or disappointment; no gain or loss; is inappropriate for prayer. Sickness, health; plenty, poverty; safety, danger; companionship, solitude; sleep, wakefulness; hunger, satisfaction; all conceivable possibilities of honest individual experience; are within prayer's permitted range. To the throne of the heavenly grace, burdens and ex-

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ultancies alike may be trustfully, reverently borne.

Nor may it be doubted that objective results are thus achieved.

With reference thereto, the biblical teaching is clear and insistent. The Bible is a treasure-house of recorded answers to prayer. Therein penitent souls have sought forgiveness, and the weight of condemnation has been lifted clean away. Souls tempest-tossed and afraid have sought for repose of spirit, and the calm courage has come from above, while yet they spoke. The bereaved and desolate have looked upward, and divine comfort has given them a song in the night-season. The worn and weary have waited on God, and have felt beneath them the everlasting arms. The dying

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have committed themselves to him whom they have trusted, and death has been swallowed up in victory.

For illustrations of prayer's effects, the Bible does not hesitate to turn to the physical realm. Therein, the victory and defeat of armies; the destruction and preservation of cities; the staying of pestilence, and the bringing of rain upon the parched earth; have been accomplished by prayer. In the biblical record, prayer has opened prison doors, and healed the sick, and exorcised demons. At the call of prayer, the Jehovah of the Bible has made the "forces of nature" to be as one who is under authority, to whom it is said, Go, and he goeth, or Come, and he cometh.

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Doubtless, it is often thought that prayer with reference to physical results is necessarily hedged in by the "fixedness of nature's course." It is often imagined that were prayer limited to spiritual concerns, its way would be less troubled. But the difficulty, if it exists at all, is universal. Either there is an insurmountable barrier to the current and course of prayer in all directions, or there is essentially none in any direction.

Prayer, in its relation to physical results, is not antagonized by the course of nature. Its working is as serene as that of time or number. Its prestige is as safe as that of light or life. It is wholly justifiable to aver that the physical universe was made, and that it is now sustained and governed, with reference to

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prayer. There is no decree older than the decree of prayer. Prayer's sanction is not antedated by even

“The law that was before the worlds,—
before

That far first whisper on the ancient deep;
The law that swings Arcturus on the north,
And hurls the soul of man upon its way.”

So far from prayer finding its restriction in the laws of nature, those laws have had, for one of their immemorial ends, the fulfilment of prayer's behests. The rhythm of their movements and the sweep of their might have been in honor of, have been a part of, prayer's triumphal progress. It is scarce an imagining, to say that when true prayer lifts even its feeblest cry, light, heat, electricity, hearken; that gravitation, cohesion, chemical affinity, take notice; that fire,

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water, air, give heed; that the globe, the planets, the starry systems, turn thitherward their quick attention.

As has been pointed out, God is immanent in nature; so that in God nature has not only its origin but also its ever renewed support. All things and all events in nature are God's acts. The order in which things exist and events occur in nature is simply God's mode of working. God is first cause and, save in the sphere of finite wills, there are no second causes. For example, gravitation varying directly as the mass and inversely as the square of the distance is God's immediate and constant action; and whatever is effected through gravitation is, so far forth, the instant effect of divine choice and power. The realities of na-

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ture less intercept and put at distance the divine agency, than pen and ink and paper intercept and put at distance the agency of him who writes. Literal truth was spoken by the artless child who said, "I have been playing ball with God; I threw up my ball, and God threw it back to me."

Accordingly, the supernatural and the natural are, in their proper use, but designations of cause and effect. The supernatural is the divine, personal, causative force from which the natural proceeds, and by which it is directed and upheld. The restoring of the dead to life is no more supernatural than the blooming of a flower or the falling of a raindrop. In either case the causation is divine. A miracle is only God's unusual action, to the end that he may the more impress

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himself and his truth upon the observer and, by the observer's testimony, upon others. Such unusual, wonder-compelling action appears appropriate to times comparatively rude. At no time is it more a violation of the fundamental plan of nature, than a teacher's unusual tone of voice, in admonishing an inattentive pupil, is a violation of the laws of articulate utterance. To-day God distinctly speaks through science. He himself has given modern science her spirit of inquiry. His breath has inspired her understanding. Her discoveries are discoveries of his works and ways. It is in accordance with his will that now science gives new significance to the speech which day utters, and higher meaning to the knowledge which night shows.

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Well may an all-wise, all-loving and immanent God covenant to answer prayer, no less in the physical than in the spiritual realm. As creator and sustainer of both finite mind and material universe; as omnipresent contriver of nature and her laws; and as, from the beginning, foreseer of the end; God is clearly able, for those who pray aright, to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Certainly the teaching of the Bible is emphatic concerning the objective efficiency of prayer. And this teaching is, in both theory and practice, radically essential. It by no means suffices that out of requests to God, and the assurance that those requests are attentively heard, there comes to the praying one a sense

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of filial relationship and a realization of most blessed communion with God. The fabric of prayer itself falls, the very foundation disappears, the instant that prayer is denied an objective power. In the presence of such a denial, prayer's promise becomes insincere, and the appointed privilege a dishonor to both God and man. If prayer has valid warrant, that warrant must include results directly secured and objectively actual. Prayer's rational authorization must mean its real prerogative.

If it be suggested that thus infinite power and love are dependent on finite and imperfect desire, the adequate reply has already been given, in the revelation, through the Lord's Prayer, of the nature of prayer itself.

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The practical safeguard is in the disclosed fact that no special request is even prayerful, save as it is prefaced, and penetrated, and perfected, by the greater, intenser desire for the realization of God's own holy will. As has been seen, the heavenly Father delights to receive requests from his loving, obedient children. Therefore he ensures filial liberty in asking, and paternal freedom in bestowing, by providing that every special plea shall be ensphered in the higher, vaster wish for the complete accomplishing of the divine ideal.

Illustrative of this is our Lord's repeated use, in connection with prayer, of the words 'in my name.' To his disciples our Lord declared, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will

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I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do.”

An understanding of the words ‘in my name’ involves the special significance of biblical names. With us names are, for the most part, mere designations. In biblical usage names customarily represent not only persons but also essential characteristics. Abraham means ‘The father of a multitude.’ Jacob signifies ‘Supplanter’; Joshua, ‘A saviour’; Jonathan, ‘Jehovah has given’; Immanuel, ‘God with us’; Jerusalem, ‘City of peace.’ The names of God are specially significant: first, *Elohim*, the general idea of supreme Deity; then, *El Shaddai*, ‘Almighty God’; later, *Yahweh*, ‘I am that I am,’ a name rendered by

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the word Jehovah. Thus the ancient names of God expressed his nature—his supremacy, his power, his self-existence.

As the divine revelation unfolded, distinctly moral attributes were clustered about God's name, that name still representing his divine personality. To Moses in the mount God proclaimed himself as "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty." Thus the name of God was ever synonymous with the nature of God; so that the great sinfulness of taking God's name in vain consisted in the underlying fact that thereby God himself was mocked and his very nature blasphemed.

When the Psalmist wrote,

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“He restoreth my soul:

He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake,”

he affirmed that God was gracious for his nature's sake, because he could not be untrue to himself. In the Bible and in relation to God, name signifies nature. “Holy and reverend is his name.”

In keeping with the Old Testament significance of names, our Lord was called JESUS, ‘A Saviour,’ for the angel declared, “It is he that shall save his people from their sins.” His name also was identified with his nature and mission. When our Lord affirms, “The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me,” he means that he acts by his Father's power, in harmony with his Father's will, as it were

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in his Father's stead. When he declares, "Where two or three are gathered in my name (literally into my name), there am I in the midst of them," he means that their assembling is in his spirit, in purposed accord with his desires, and in participation in his nature. Similar in meaning are the passages in which our Lord speaks of believing in (or into) his name, of suffering for his name's sake, and of giving in his name cups of cold water. His teaching is that his true followers are sharers of his purposes and feelings, and that in a certain representative way they stand in his place. They are branches of Christ the vine.

When, therefore, our Lord promises gifts to those who ask in his name, he implies that the giving is to those whose

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asking is in his nature, those whose desires are such as he cherishes, those who, in their measure, embody his relation to the Father. The inheritors of the promise are those in whom Christ lives, even as St. Paul declares, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me"; or as St. John writes, "And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

If it is now suggested that, since the special plea is thus ensphered in the vaster desire, the prayer-circle returns upon itself and the circuit becomes superfluous, a two-fold answer is at hand.

On the one side is the truth that God has instituted and commanded prayer. Prayer is integral in the divine plan. As was clearly seen, to eliminate prayer

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would be to change fundamentally the order of the universe. He, then, who believes in the wisdom and goodness of God, must deem it unjustifiable to reckon as superfluous what God has distinctly ordained.

On the other side is the truth that, over and above the objective results which prayer attains, the one who prays is thereby brought into such delightful, quickening communion with God, as might scarce be gained in other ways. Moreover, it is a sad mistake to think of the results of prayer in relation to material things, as confined to the mere bestowal of what is requested. In effect, it is one thing to receive God's gifts with thoughtlessness, and a very different thing to receive the same gifts in answer to prayer. The former receiving may be perverted to spiritual harm; the

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latter receiving brings the suppliant into thankful devotion to the service of God. Still further, as prayer is profoundly ethical, demanding, as its initial requirement, that the character of the suppliant shall be centrally right, he who prays is thus inspired to seek whatever a right character involves and produces. He who pleads for the honoring of God's name, the triumph of his righteous authority, the doing of his perfect will, therein pleads for those realizations in his own heart and life. Prayer, accordingly, is very far from being superfluous.

Returning to the fundamental fact that prayer has power with God and does prevail, it may be truthfully affirmed, not only that all real prayers are answered, but also that all real prayers are

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answered affirmatively; that the answer is not sometimes by refusal, but always by assent.

Nor does this form of truthful affirmation lack decisive practical utility. In derogation of both the philosophy and practice of prayer, it has been persistently alleged that the sheer variance in prayerful petitions is such as to necessitate manifold denials. It has even been declared that the spectacle of pleadings antagonistic to one another, mutually contradictory, was enough fatally to discredit prayer's standing and use. But real prayers present no such antagonisms. Prayer itself admits no such contradictions.

A true prayer may include many or few special requests; yet that which constitutes the prayer, that which makes the

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supplication prayerful, is a supreme desire for the hallowing of the Father's name, the coming of his kingdom and the doing of his will. That supreme desire *is* the prayer—the prayer of prayer. Only by way of familiar usage, an accommodation of language, is a special, personal plea called 'the prayer.' As has been shown, each special plea, in order to come within the province of prayer, must include itself in the controlling desire for the fulfilment of God's all-wise, all-loving purpose. In mere form, special pleas may be opposed to each other, and one or the other special plea may be denied. Such denial, however, is in veritable accordance with the suppliant's dominant wish. It remains, accordingly, that true prayers never contradict each other. True prayers always receive compliant response.

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Let prayers with reference to physical issues furnish illustration.

Let it be supposed that one who dwells inland pleads for relief from drought. He says, "O thou who hast meted out the waters by measure, and hast made a decree for the rain; who, in thy good pleasure, givest rain upon the earth, and sendest waters upon the fields; our prayer is unto thee. In thy great mercy permit, we entreat thee, the overhanging clouds to abide and deepen, and abundant rain to fall. We are desolate and afflicted. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth. In vain the cattle search for the water-courses, and creeping things are beside themselves by reason of the drought. The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; and their tongue faileth

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for thirst. The little ones faint and die. Strong men perish, and the wasting is sore in the land. Therefore, hear thou the cry of the afflicted, and come speedily to our help."

Meantime, off the adjacent coast, a tempest-tossed ship seeks her haven. The winds have driven her from her course. The clouds hide both star and sun. The coast itself is dangerous. Accordingly, he who is in command, and on whom the human responsibility rests, seeks help from God. He says, "O thou who layest the beams of thy chambers in the waters; who makest the clouds thy chariot, and walkest upon the wings of the wind; in compassion hear our prayer. Our hope is in thee. Dispel, we beseech thee, the gloom which shuts us in. If the billows

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swallow us up; if we go down alive into the depths; they who watch and wait will mourn, and sorrow will fill the land. Into my hands thou hast given these many people. How can I let thee go, except thou send swift deliverance?"

The supposition is, truly, that coast and inland are within the same climatic bounds; that, in their adjacence, what comes to one must naturally come to the other.

Is it then true that the one prayer, or the other, must be denied? Assuredly not. Must we say, "The prayer which included the plea for clouds and rain was refused, if star or sun shone forth; and the prayer which embraced the plea for star-lit night or radiant day was negatived, if the clouds held sway and the

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rain fell"? Nay, verily. Both prayers were affirmatively answered.

Consider anew the case of him who asked for rain. What, in full, profound, authentic fact, was his supreme request? As was previously seen, his very attitude of prayer committed him, not only to a reverent recognition of the divine Fatherhood, but also to a central desire for the hallowing of God's name, the universal coming of God's kingdom, and the perfect doing of God's will. Though he did not utter the embodying words, his controlling wish, his thrice-controlling choice, was precisely that. Otherwise, there was no true prayer, but only an unwarranted, because an unfilial, asking.

Thus his prayer, put in terms of exactest truth, ran thus:—"Father in heaven,

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I freely plead for rain. It seems as if its coming must be for thy glory and the good of men. For it my heart and flesh cry out. But if the greater interests of another will thereby be injured; if the larger well-being of other regions will be sacrificed; if, to accomplish it, thou must unwisely change thy plan; if, on the whole, it be not best; then I plead that the clouds may vanish, and the rain be withheld. I neither wish, nor as a loyal suppliant can wish, anything which is at all inconsistent with thy love, the realization of thy glory, the fulfilment of thy holy will. Thy will, and thine alone, be done."

If the rain is not sent, it is because its sending is not most blessed; and God, therein, but takes the suppliant at his word. In a true, deep, most literal sense, God grants his prayer. To have sent

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the rain would have been to deny his prayer.

Similar, entirely similar, is the case of him whose plea was for the cloudless sky. With him also, the realizing of God's infinitely beneficent glory, the doing of God's most righteous will, was the center, the soul, of his supplication. His access to the Hearer of prayer was gained on that very condition. To him, as thus coming, the golden scepter was held forth. Had he not so come, his act would not have been true prayer. Accordingly, his plea of pleas was granted, even though the clouds prevailed. His prayer received compliant response.

In other words, there can be no prayer for rain, or for sunshine, or for any special result whatever—and for that alone.

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A special plea is prayerful, only as it allies itself with, includes itself in, the larger plea for the perfect accomplishment of God's perfect will.

The uninstructed poet may tell how

“Prayer that battles prayer with awful might,
Eternally tempestuous rolls to heaven.”

But true prayer knows no such war nor waste. Each special plea is borne to God on the wings of the greater plea that God's choice may be accomplished, as in heaven, so on earth.

If the inquiry still recurs, Why then should special and subordinate pleas be made? the recurring answer is still in place:—Because God has so permitted

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and enjoined. And along with that stands the impressive suggestion, "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" It were the pity of pities if, in the prayer-including plan of God, special blessings must be withheld for the reason that no one rightly asked for their bestowal.

Let two further and typical examples confirm the truth that all real prayers receive compliant response. Let one example be that of prayer for the conversion of a friend.

And here it is to be borne in mind that, in such a request, God is asked to act with reference to a soul as sovereignly free as is the soul who prays; a soul whose freedom of choice God himself has bestowed, and reverently maintained.

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Suppose, accordingly, that the soul prayed for, so confirms himself in hardness of heart, so sets himself against the persuading Spirit, that God's wisdom cannot sanction the breaking down of the resistance; that even God's love cannot find a rightful way to the overcoming of the cherished opposition: and that thus the soul remains unsaved. Is there a denial of the prayer?

The prayer ran thus:—"Father of Spirits, Restorer of the wandering, Redeemer of the lost, Oh save my friend. Turn him from error's ways. Cause him to know and love thy truth. By the Spirit's quickening, let his better nature triumph. Let his repentance make possible his forgiveness, and his grateful devotion admit him to thy kingdom. The years fly swiftly. Character grows fixed. Death lies in wait. The judgment has

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already begun. Eternity holds endless, changeless award. In mercy, therefore, hasten thy rescue.

“But if thou callest, and he will not answer; if thou invitest, and he still refuses; if thine utmost rightful entreaty is set at naught; if, at last, thou must lift the pitying lament, Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life; my soul, even in its anguish, must own that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.”

Though the soul prayed for refused to be saved, the prayer was not denied. In the prayer, personal and intense affection for the friend was joined with adoring love toward God; and the adoring love included and transfigured the personal

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affection. The consciousness of the Father's immeasurable love, the Saviour's boundless compassion, the Spirit's fathomless pity, wrought to the strengthening, the exalting of the human affection; yet that higher consciousness encompassed the human affection, and was itself supreme. That God's all-perfect will might be fulfilled in the saving of an immortal soul, was the rightly earnest entreaty. Though the friend's opposing choice fatally intervened, the suppliant's supreme desire for the realization of God's righteous glory remained unchanged.

Had the conversion been wrought, under the existing conditions, that divine perfection which is the hope of all souls would have suffered irreparable loss. The result was, on God's part, in accord with the primal wish, the controlling

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plea, of the intercessor. His prayer was not denied.

As the other typical example of the truth that no real prayer is answered by denial, take prayer for the Holy Spirit,—for his comforting, sanctifying presence in the heart and life of the suppliant himself.

For such prayer there is the warrant of the words, “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” There should be no doubt that real prayer for the Holy Spirit’s guidance is always affirmatively answered.

Yet it is not infrequently implied

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that prayers for the Spirit's presence do not always gain compliant response. Such implication, when contrasted not only with the matter-of-fact, unqualified, word of Scripture, but also with the plain sense and logic of the case, indicates a radical misunderstanding of both the nature of prayer and the response which prayer receives.

Let us consider the petitions of a so-called prayer for the Holy Spirit,—such a prayer as is thought to be sometimes denied.

The suppliant says, “ Our Father who art in heaven, thou who givest freely and dost not upbraid, we acknowledge that we are unworthy of thy manifold favors. We pray thee to look in mercy upon our low estate. We hear of the outpouring

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of the Spirit in many places, in many lands. Upon us also send reviving showers. We crave the fruit of the Spirit,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. We long for that experience in which the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. Thy will be done.”

Yet the suppliant goes from his closet, or from the meeting for prayer, with the half-complacent feeling that his dutiful request has been refused.

The trouble was, that he did not pray; or, if he prayed at all, his prayer was too nearly insincere to admit of large response.

He spoke entreatingly of what involved, as its first condition, his own

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honestly purposed consecration. He invoked an assistance which he knew could only be given, as he himself was in earnest coöperation. He spoke fondly of results which he well understood to be impossible, save as his own wish and will and effort were thoroughly enlisted. Yet he had no such purpose. He knew himself to be a stranger to such striving. Abstractly, imaginatively, he may have desired that for which he asked; but practically he did not greatly mind.

His altogether honest statement might have been this:—"O thou who hearest prayer, I have asked, in words, for the Spirit's inspiring, sanctifying presence. Yet I know that the Spirit cannot be given in fulness to those whose present controlling choice is not pure, whose

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feeling toward an unspiritual past is not deeply contrite, and whose resolve for the future is not one of true amendment. In reality, therefore, I am asking that thou wilt not give me the Spirit in most blessed degree. I myself gainsay my pleading words. In the light of thine omniscience, my real request is seen to be for the withholding of the Spirit's abundant power."

Verily, that suppliant's plea has not been denied. Let him, of all men, refrain from suggesting that prayer's assenting responses are with exceptions. Indeed, he may count himself compassionated of God, if his false-heartedness has not driven the Spirit far away, and wrought to his own confirmation in spiritual unconcern.

Real prayer for the Holy Spirit always gains affirmative answer, even as all

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real prayer receives compliant response to its central, controlling desire.

Here let it be realized how the truth concerning the answering of prayer clarifies and intensifies our apprehension of the importance of character.

Since God is pleased to give compliant response to all real prayer; and since there can be no real prayer, save as he who intercedes is essentially at one with God in heart and life; character is thereby the more clearly invested with its true, transcendent importance. It appears that what the soul is in its cherished thoughts and controlling volitions, decides not only its acceptance with God, but also its competence for gaining the blessings which await prayerful request.

No man has a right to disqualify him-

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self for successful prayer. He is answerable for the resultant loss to his own soul. He is also answerable for holy interests beyond his merely personal realm. As touching prayer, none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. He who goes away unsaved at last, goes away bearing the crushing weight of the good for himself and others of which his prayerlessness has made forfeit.

Accordingly, since essentially right character is the condition of prayer; since, doubtless, God could not be infinitely wise and loving, and rest prayer's prerogative on any other condition; it is needful that prayer should be clearly apprehended in its judicial relation. Certain is it that prayer—privilege and benediction though it be—judges him

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who essays its use. Therein it is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow." It is "quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." No soul can truly pray, unless he loves God, and undertakes God's service.

As has been perceived, the love may be that which accompanies childhood's slender knowledge, or the wayfarer's imperfect wisdom, or even the pagan's conscientious superstition. The service may be that of the little ones who play in the streets of the city of vision, or of believers new to the kingdom's work and worship, or of those whose only offerings are the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite heart. Still, the love must be there, and the spirit of service be truly present, or the petition is not true prayer.

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Prayer goes hand in hand with awakening repentance, and with dawning faith. It interprets the longing of those who seek God, if haply they may find him. "Behold he prayeth," may be announcement of the very beginning of Christian discipleship. Yet the penitent trust, the spiritual out-reaching, must inform the plea, or that plea is not truly prayerful.

What an incalculable gain to prayer and prayer's results, were this truth everywhere accepted and altogether realized!

The privileges of prayer are too manifestly precious to be readily given up; and when it was realized that prayer was for those only who could sincerely adopt the petitions enjoined by the Master, then, surely, there would be an increase

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of holy purpose and of upright life. Were it comprehended that all other desires, in order to be regarded as within prayer's scope, must be infused with a supreme desire for the doing of God's will, and be accompanied by the suppliant's readiness to be treated in accordance with his treatment of others, there would ensue an earnest purifying of thought and word and deed.

The decisiveness of the relation of character to prayer is shown in the biblical requirement that prayer shall be unceasing. St. Luke writes, "And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray and not to faint." The historian of Acts writes, "These all, with one accord, continued steadfastly in prayer." Portraying es-

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essential features of the Christian life, St. Paul writes to the disciples in Rome, "In diligence, not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation"; and then adds, as in due sequence, "continuing steadfastly in prayer." In his message to the Colossians, having spoken of their spiritual resurrection with Christ, and having said, "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord," he proceeds, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving."

And this requirement but reflects the fact that prayerfulness is part of the true suppliant's character, thus sharing in character's permanence. Renewed character is the attitude and conduct of a penitent child toward a forgiving father,

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of a repentant subject toward a righteous, compassionate ruler. But prayer is the natural, inevitable expression of that same fundamental relation. Therefore true prayerfulness is more than a characteristic; it is character itself. Prayer is a state, as character is a state. Ceaseless prayer, embodying continuous character, is a rational necessity. He who thinks that he can pray at special times, without in some way praying ceaselessly, imperils his acceptance at mercy's seat. Unless, all the while, the underlying thought, the controlling purpose, the supreme effort, has been for the hallowing of God's name, the confirming of his dominion, the fulfilling of his desire, how can an occasional plea for the accomplishment of those ends be deemed sincere?



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It is well that the true doctrine of prayer is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; that it sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, to purify the sons of supplication, so that they may offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness. It is practically blessed that the dearest of favors, the tenderest of permissions, should be discerned as like the divine Giver, "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

Moreover, prayer's true analysis and synthesis, as thus made in the light of the teaching of our Lord, gives the only adequate answer to those who suggest a "test" of prayer,—a test analogous to



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that wherewith science tries her conclusions in laboratory or field.

It has been said, in substance, "If prayer avails in relation to things other than purely spiritual, let Christians unitedly ask, for example, that cloudless skies shall give abundant showers, or that winds shall blow when only uniform temperature pervades the air." It has been added, "If the prayed-for result ensues, we will own that prayer's domain is universal, and that it is a force ordained of God."

It may well be that such "prayer-gauges" have been proposed in honesty of thought and purpose. It is not improbable that the suggestion has reflected the intentional fair-mindedness of its authors. With them also, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth has spoken.

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What misapprehension of prayer's very nature! Evidently it was thought that prayer could be simple asking; that it was, or might be, merely an appeal to power; and that, unless prayer for physical results submitted itself to physical tests, and therein came off triumphant, the current theory concerning prayer was theory only.

“As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's
pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy
nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

But, as has been shown, prayer cannot be simple asking, nor a mere appeal to power. As has been discerned, the true doctrine of prayer, the biblical and ra-

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tional doctrine, rejects that conception. It not only gives it no countenance, it cordially denies it. It expels it with intellectual and moral scorn.

The true doctrine affirms that prayer is essentially holy, earnest desire directed trustfully, adoringly, to God. By the informing example of the Lord's Prayer, it appears that the vital condition of any prayerful request is a precedent, central, supreme desire that God's all-worthy name shall be hallowed, his kingdom established, his holy will everywhere obeyed. There can be no real prayer which is not, in spirit and in effect, thus composed.

Suppose that in deference to the suggestion of a "test" of prayer for physical results, Christians should assemble to pray for rain from out a clear sky, or

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for rushing wind while the normal conditions of wind are absent.

If they really pray, they must, in effect, sincerely say, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. If, in thy perfect wisdom and love, thou dost deem it best to send rain from cloudless skies, or wind from air unmoved by heat and cold, in order that thus, to those who require a "sign," may be given the proof which they think will be convincing, then we plead that thou wilt send the rain and cause the wind to blow. Our desire is that to all minds and hearts thy gracious ways may be savingly known. But if the required results are not in furtherance of the highest good of all thy universe, we pray that they be not wrought. Thy will be done."

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Let it still be remembered that true prayer of essentially other sort than that is impossible; that the divinely imparted and divinely revealed nature of prayer forbids aught else.

In view of that simple truth, is it conceivable that minds at all acquainted with the nature of the issue, could propose such a "prayer-gauge"? Were it reasonable, under such conditions, to expect that prayer should be answered by rains descending and winds blowing?

Prayer is, in itself, incapable of submission to peremptory tests. It comes to its place in the relations of cause and effect, only through an adoring appeal to the divine wisdom and love. Whether or not it will gain the physical

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results for which it incidentally, subordina-
tely pleads, can be determined only
when the Answerer of prayer has taken
all things into account, and decided what
the highest well-being of his universe
requires.

The only available "test" of prayer
is the authentic history of those who,
through the ages, have prayed, and the
experience of those who now offer peti-
tions in harmony with the Master's teach-
ing. If one would put prayer to the
proof, let him turn to God in a penitent,
worshipful trust which carries with it
a supremely purposed consecration of
heart and life. Let him, with God's
proffered help, fix his highest and
permanent desire on the hallowing of
God's name, the universal triumph of
God's kingdom, and the perfect realiza-

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tion of God's holy will. So prepared, let him come to God, confident that it is his privilege and duty alike to include in his requests all things which appear to be needful, in either his own life or the life of his fellowmen. Let him not be found wanting in pleas inclusive of the whole range of spiritual and temporal good, lest, in the divine plan of prayer, blessings should be withheld, because he omitted the request.

And since the finite mind cannot compass the manifoldness of good, let him make his whole conscious life a prayer, his whole responsible being an invocation. Then will he realize the subjective and objective blessedness of prayer, and be able to testify aright concerning the faithfulness of a prayer-hearing God.

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Much is heard, and rightly, concerning faith as a condition of prevailing prayer; and the requisite faith is frequently represented as specially related to specific requests. That faith is often set forth as a confident belief that the particular thing asked for will be bestowed.

Undoubtedly, a pre-condition of real prayer is the full conviction that there is One who hears petitions, and who demonstrates his approval of their prayerful presentation. No wonder that the Scripture reads, "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."

Furthermore, it is beyond doubt that acceptance with God, whether with reference to prayer or to any other right

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relationship, presupposes such penitent commitment of soul, such trustfully purposed consecration, as issues in a life of faithful endeavor. It is character—character inspired from above and strengthened by grace divine, yet none the less personal and individual—which has power with God. The decisive word is, “The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.”

But contrariwise, and by those very tokens, it appears that the suppliant who brings to God his special requests, is not judged by the degree of his confidence concerning the granting of those special requests. Complete confidence respecting a particular result is practically impossible, save as such confidence may be given of God.

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In prayer, the appeal is to one who is infinitely wise and loving, and who guards perfectly the interests of his universal realm. Freedom in the presentation of specific pleas rests primarily on the divine perfection. Specific pleas may be freely made, for the very reason that he who hears is all-wise to decide. Naturally, the mind of one who prays for specific results is in an undetermined expectancy.

Therefore neither intellectually nor morally is the suppliant bound to persuade himself of the certainty of the desired result. He knows that God hears his petition; that God gives to it a heed which could not be more graciously honoring, though that petition were the only one ever presented. The praying one

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knows that the decision will be in accordance with his own major plea,—“Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.” Of himself, that is all he knows. Even our Saviour, in the humanity of his anguish, could but cry, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.”

What, then, is the true explanation of the statements:—“And he saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do

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what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever, ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

God's word is its own interpreter. Light comes by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

For example, our ever blessed Lord declared, "If thy right eye causeth thee

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to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee." There have been believers who thought that those words were to be taken literally; but intelligent, reverent Christian judgment has strictly forbidden self-mutilation.

Our Lord said, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." Yet our Lord's "Verily, verily" exceeded the simple "Yea." Of God himself it is written, "For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself." St. Paul writes, "But I call God for a witness upon my soul." Again, "I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord." The

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word of Revelation is, "And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever."

Our Lord gave the injunction:—"But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Yet when, later, in the high priest's palace, and for alleged disrespect to a superior, an officer struck Jesus, he answered, in swift and indignant remonstrance, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

His further injunction was, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away." But the united voice of those who are the wisest Christian friends of

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the poor, forbids us, at our peril, to bestow gifts in charity, except as we safeguard ourselves against imposture, and promote the self-respect and self-helpfulness of each recipient.

Our Lord averred, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." And again his word was, "Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." Yet he was the Prince of Peace. His advent was hailed by the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." Wherever his gospel prevails, hatreds and divisions and wars give way to love and good-will.

Our Lord affirmed, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the

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kingdom of God.” But sanctified reason perceives that the real difficulty is not that a man is rich,—every man is rich as compared with him who has greatly less—but that he is selfishly worldly: as elsewhere our Lord himself explained:—“Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.”

“Then spake Jesus to the multitudes and to his disciples saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe.” Yet again and again he sanctioned the breaking of rabbinical law, and set at naught Mosaic requirements which related to external acts.

Our Lord gave direction:—“When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy

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kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed." None the less, he honored with his presence and participation the marriage supper at Cana; and all Christendom, from that day to this, has rejoiced in festive gatherings sacred to the family, or commemorative of cherished friendships.

Our Lord declared, "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Yet Christianity has greatly deepened natural affection, and the personal acceptance of Christ has set family kinships in rarest exaltation.

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Just before his entrance into the garden of Gethsemane, our Lord gave instruction to his followers:—"But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword." Yet in the garden he said to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

The cumulative and culminant inference from these and similar utterances of our Lord is unmistakably clear.

He who spoke such words was Lord not only of the sabbath, but also of language and of thought. He knew what was in man; and his confident appeal was to the rational sense of his hearers. He disdained the fear of being misunder-

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stood. It was his mission to teach truth effectively; to set men thinking; to oblige them to turn from the letter to the spirit. To this end, he taught with divine freedom. He aroused his hearers by overpassing formal bounds. He impressed them by utterances impossible of verbal acceptance. He forced men to seek the explanation which should vindicate both himself and his doctrine. He made literal over-statement serve essential fact. He exercised the holy liberty of prophet and king. And when his startling figures of speech are set in fair relation to his general and evidently matter-of-fact instruction, the emphasized truth, taking on due proportion, so gleams and glows that thenceforth it can neither be overlooked nor misunderstood.

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Plainly akin to the examples cited in comparison are the statements of our Lord respecting answers to prayer. By the witness of Scripture and reason alike, those statements are not intended to teach that all things requested in prayer will be received; nor that the faith most pleasing to God involves the assured expectation of such receiving.

The august intention, clear to logical reflection, and made doubly clear by Scriptural declarations, is to exalt the fact of prayer's objective effectiveness, and to emphasize the conditions with which the true suppliant must comply. The purpose is to make it forever manifest that he who comes to God aright in prayer, must realize that prayerful supplication has God's own authorization; that prayer's transaction is veritable and

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solemn; that its practical efficiency is limited by nothing save the suppliant's character, and the divine regard for the highest well-being of the universe; that its domain is over matter as well as mind; that, if it be best that, at prayer's petition, hills shall actually be leveled and mountains plucked up, even those effects are possible, and will be brought to pass: and that prayer is as blessedly obligatory on the part of man, as its sanction is benevolent on the part of God.

Beyond peradventure, the faith as a grain of mustard seed, which has such power in prayer, is the faith which is not merely mental, psychic, but ethical and spiritual, as well; a faith whose opposite is not so much doubt as disobedience. The faith which avails in prayer is gen-

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erically the faith that saves. It is the soul's penitent, loving commitment of itself to God in Christ, and therewith to the service of God's most blessed kingdom. It is intelligent credence carried into corresponding choice. It is subjective consecration objectively operative. It includes such confidence in the living God and such trust in his love as results in an allegiance intellectually and spiritually undivided.

Thus did the apostle apprehend it when he wrote, "But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord;—a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways!"

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Thus did our Saviour comprehend it when, as prelude to his statement respecting the removal of mountains, he said, "Have faith in God."

In other words, the doubt which hinders prayer is doubt which has in it disloyal unbelief; doubt which fails to realize God's presence, and power, and love, and the sureness of his promise; doubt which produces blameworthy instability of purpose and conduct.

Herein, by force of contrast, is added proof that the faith which enables prayer to prevail is not necessarily a confident expectation that the special request will be granted; but the larger, sounder faith which, resting in God, realizes his loving might, and supremely desires the accomplishment of his will.

A certain devout Henry Fuller thus

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prayed:—“Lord, grant me one suit, which is this: deny me all suits which are bad for me.”

In short, the faith which is mentioned as a condition of prevailing prayer is none other than the faith which accepts the revelation of God's wise and loving omnipotence, and his loving readiness to answer the supplications of his children. It is a faith which conforms itself to the Lord's Prayer, and perceives that only infinite wisdom can determine what is most highly beneficial.

The inspired teaching bids the suppliant to present himself in the quick consciousness that God is, and in the vital understanding that God answers those who really pray. He is to assure himself that with a prayer-hearing God, nothing is impossible; and in that assur-

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ance, he is to make his reverent appeal, rejoicing that "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither his ways our ways." He is literally to wait on God.

THE COMPREHENSIVE CONCLUSION IS THAT THE LORD'S PRAYER REPRESENTS THE FUNDAMENTAL, ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGABLE CONDITIONS OF ALL PRAYERFUL PETITION; AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT SEALS PRAYER'S GLORIOUS WARRANT. OTHER SCRIPTURE STATEMENTS WITH REFERENCE TO PRAYER EXPLAIN AND ILLUSTRATE THE DIVINELY GIVEN EXAMPLE. IN THAT DIVINELY GIVEN EXAMPLE, THE NATURE AND PHILOSOPHY THE PRIVILEGE AND PREROGATIVE OF PRAYER ARE PERFECTLY EMBODIED.

Consequently, it may well be that God has openly declared that prayer is his wish and will; that the atoning Son came as the praying man; that prophets and

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apostles have found in prayer their joy and strength; that the Church universal, so far as it has been true to its divine inspiration, has been a praying Church; and that, in some sense, the whole race has been moved to pray and the whole creation to lift its cry. No wonder that our Lord, having taught his disciples to pray for daily bread, and having thus sanctioned the prayerful presentation of all our personal requirements, thereafter spake a parable, to the end that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

ONE GREAT NEED, TO-DAY, IS THE OFFERING OF TRUE PRAYER.

It is the need of the individual Christian.

In the strengthening of the Christian's spiritual life it is primarily requisite that

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he perceive the nature of prayer, and that he actually pray. When he makes prayer itself, as well as answers to prayer, the test of his acceptance with God, he builds on the right foundation. Admonished, inspired, by the requirements of all prayerful petition he will be in earnest to depart from iniquity. He will seek divine assistance in the showing forth of sincerity, truth, justice, goodwill. He will trustfully strive to be loving, generous, patient, courageous, self-denying. If he has temporarily wandered, the remembrance of prayer quickening true repentance will lead him to say from the heart, "I have sinned: I will arise and return." He will desire to have in himself the mind which was also in Christ Jesus. Presenting sincerely the sovereign petitions,—“Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy

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will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," he will gratefully add the permitted requests for daily bread; for such pardon as he himself bestows; and for deliverance from all that is evil.

Cherishing the sweet, human fellowship which the Lord's Prayer, by both its words and spirit, requires, he will sympathize with all souls, and will invoke for them also the Father's sufficing favor. To the throne of grace he will upbear a world marred by sin and darkened by sorrow, in the enraptured confidence that God sent his Son, not that the world should be judged, but that through him the world should be saved. In that confidence, he will humbly resolve that he himself will not fail in his endeavor, nor be discouraged in his hope, till justice has been set in the earth, and the isles await God's law.

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In prayer he will find his consolation and comfort. Through prayer he will ever be re-inspired to a devoted life. In a trust in God, which the experiences of prayer have confirmed, he will serenely face and conquer death.

When such a spirit lovely and religious, and such a life noble and Christ-like, characterize the followers of Christ, Christianity will have free course and be glorified—and not till then.

At present, Christ's sorest wounds are inflicted in the house of his friends. If it be true, as some men of large business affirm, that church-membership affords no valid presumption, not to say guaranty, of superior personal integrity,

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the cause of Christ is put to open shame. The prevalence of God's gracious kingdom waits, indeed, for the answer to the petition, "Thy kingdom come"; but the prayer itself cannot be offered, unless the character of the suppliant is essentially harmonized with the requirements of all prayerful request.

It is written,

"Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah?

And who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;

Who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood,

And hath not sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive a blessing from Jehovah,

And righteousness from the God of his salvation."

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Contrariwise, it is written, "I cannot away with iniquity. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well."

The offering of true prayer is the need of the Christian Church.

By the Christian Church is here meant the society of those who profess and call themselves Christians. The Church is the world-wide body of professing believers, whose accepted mission is to make ethical and spiritual presentment of the reign of God on earth; to preach and spread Christ's gospel; to maintain Christian worship; to administer the

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holy sacraments; and to provide for Christian fellowship and nurture. As thus understood, the Church embraces local churches of many names, whose bond of union is the common claim of being "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself the chief corner stone."

The Church is, rightly, the handmaid of the kingdom of God. She exists, to the end that Christ may be crowned in all hearts and lives. She lives, to hasten the day when the kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

To the Church, as the great body of professed believers, God assigns the same privilege and duty of prayer, which he assigns to the individual Christian. The

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word is, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them, of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The Pentecostal manifestation was vouchsafed to those who, with one accord, had continued steadfastly in prayer, and who were all together in one place. Peter's release from prison is represented as directly related to the fact that prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him. From earliest times, prayer has been an essential part of Christian worship. Wherever Christians have worshipfully gathered,—in sanctuary or cave or catacomb—the forms of prayer have been observed. Ample is the authority for the belief that united prayer, whether of the local

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church or the agreeing churches, possesses a heightened power, which comes from the very consent of thought and feeling and desire.

Yet the condition precedent of true prayer on the part of either the Church or the churches, is the same as for the individual member. Before she can prevailingly pray, the Church must keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and be of one mind in the rejection of every known offence.

For the churches, the call now, as of old, is to repentance and the works of love. We read, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." To the church in Ephesus:—"But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Repent

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and do thy first works." To the church in Sardis:—"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent." To the church in Philadelphia:—"I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." To the church in Laodicea:—"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

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The instant the Church—embracing the local churches of many names—speaks the words, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth,” that instant her right to pray, her very power to pray, is divinely challenged. The use of those vital words implies that the Church herself is actually hallowing the one Name, and devotedly serving the one kingdom, and unitedly striving for the accomplishment of the one holy will. As to her integrity with reference to such faith and service, the Church, answering to her own conscience, must also answer to God. In the light of the word of God, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, she must assure herself that she speaks sincerely.

Notwithstanding her roll-call, her

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creed, her discipline, her temples, her liturgies, her sacraments, she cannot enter the audience-chamber where prayer is heard, except as she strives to present herself with clean hands and a pure heart.

Does the Church so live? Does the Church so pray?

Is she holding denominational differences in a rightful largeness of love? Does she, in glad sincerity, write above her portals, "The rich and the poor meet together: Jehovah is the maker of them all"? Is she seeking to sound the depths of the Master's word, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"? Does she view souls as God views them, wandering and wasted, yet bearing the divine image; ruined by sin yet heirs of salvation through the aton-

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ing Son? Does she adopt the central purpose of her Lord,—the seeking and the saving of the lost? Is she true to the great command, “Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations”?

Is she cherishing passionately, self-sacrificingly, the vision of society holily transformed; the ideal of civic, national, international righteousness made graciously supreme; the final and glorious consummation in which true individualism and rightful communism shall be harmoniously combined, to the highest ennobling of humanity and the coincident exalting of the divine glory?

Unless, substantially, the Church can answer these questions in a manifestly honest affirmative, she cannot truly pray. She may, indeed, repent, and along with the repentance, ask God’s mercy. She may do works meet for repentance, and

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with the doing bespeak God's blessing. But she cannot pray the prayer which befits her sacred privilege,—the prayer which may avail for the rebuilding of the world into its forfeited glory—save as she qualifies herself through a living faith proved by faithful deeds.

The delay of the triumph of the kingdom of God is demonstration that neither the myriad professing Christians, nor the almost countless churches, are praying as they ought. The hope of psalmist, the vision of prophet, the declaration of apostle, the sure promise of the Father, all bear witness that when those who love God unite in supplications which are truly, greatly prayerful,—supplications in which words and deeds are holily combined—the world's darkness

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will give place to light, and the world's death be changed to life.

Let, then, the truth concerning prayer, as set forth throughout the Bible and exemplified in the Lord's Prayer, be everywhere welcomed, to the glory of God, to the purifying and comforting of the believer, to the upbuilding and perfecting of the churches and the Church, and thus to the transforming of the kingdom of the world into the kingdom of our Lord.

The biblical doctrine of prayer is the article not only of a standing or a falling Church, but also of a recreated or a recreant world.

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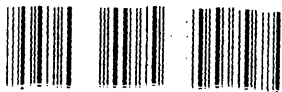
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